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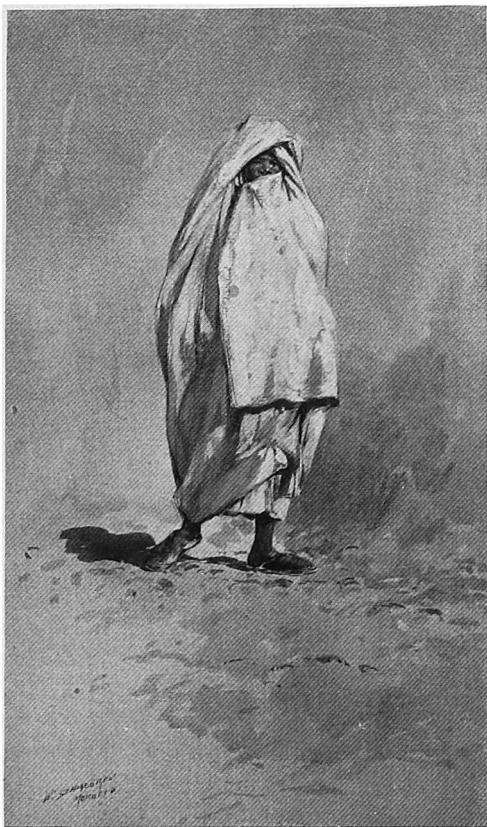
VENETIAN FISHING-BOAT
By William Schmedtgen

THE ARTIST'S QUEST OF TYPES

Convention in modern life is fast robbing the artist classes of their most cherished material. Its thralldom dominates everything. One sees its fell influence in dress, in manners and customs, in home decoration, in the manner in which grounds are laid out and adorned, even in smirks and smiles that are fashioned after the approved pattern. As a rule, the better the appearance a person makes, according to the prevailing notions and canons of taste, the fewer distinctive features he offers worthy of the study of the artist. The smarter or more "improved" an estate is, the less it has to offer in picturesque beauty.

In a word, fashion rules with an iron hand, and from the artist's standpoint, tends to crush out the soul from man and his surroundings. Time was when the artist could say with the positiveness of conviction, "Thou art Peter." Now he looks at his prospective subject and is in doubt. There is something of Peter in him, it is true; not a little of Paul and Luke and John; marked suggestions of the hatter, the clothier, the designer of ties, the inventor of social forms that harness humanity, and other such unmistakable adjuncts of modern make-up. But Peter? His personality is largely gone—vanished with the money he had to pay for his outfit and his social status. He is Peter—plus.

And so with those bits of God's footstool we call "lands reclaimed



WOMAN IN WHITE
By William Schmedtgen

gentility to be disturbed—scarcely offers a ripple or an artistic white cap to break tiresome sameness.

To be sure, there are still expressive eyes, strong noses, shapely chins, lordly carriages. But, goodness, trousers are all shaped on the same pattern and hung in the same way; coats are cut variously, but worn according to rule; hats, ditto. An unwritten law divorces the silk hat from the sack-coat—and everybody knows a sack-coat and a silk hat make a picturesque combination!

And women's attire—well, it's the same thing over again. We have balloon sleeves one season and skin-tight arm-coverings the next; golf-skirts to-day and street-sweeping trains to-morrow; reds for all complexions this season and electric blues

from the wilderness." They are tricked out with a monotony of barbed wire or snake fences and other et ceteras of development. Their fields, gardens, orchards, lanes, cabbage-rows, ricks, everything, savors of geometry. And nobody but Euclid ever thought geometry was artistic.

Civilization, to cut a long story short, while it is the great refiner of mankind, is also the great commoner. It tends to a uniformity of practices and styles; it crushes out individuality; suborns personal tastes. Strong individual types that were once so common as never to provoke a word of comment are now so rare as to suggest the enterprise of coralling them in museums for exhibition purposes. Speaking broadly, gentility is prone, like water, to seek a level, whose placid surface—it is bad form for

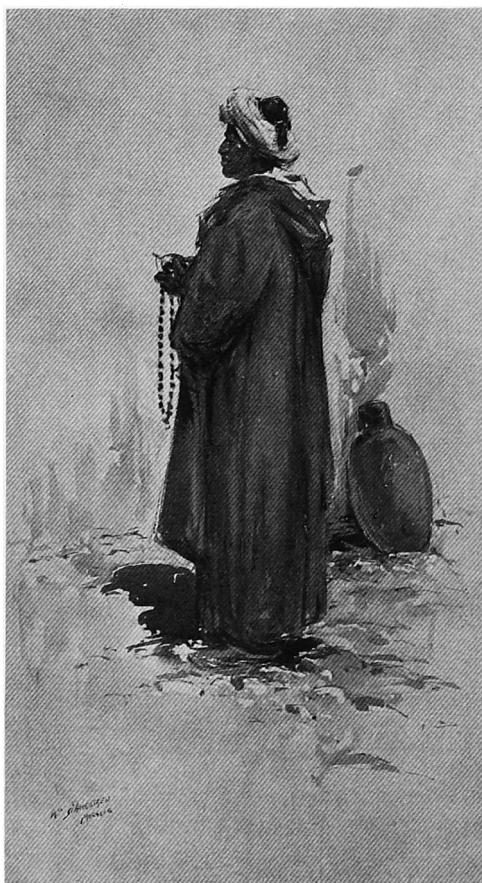


and bronze greens for another. To-day the modiste recognizes that nature knows a thing or two about anatomy. To-morrow she changes her mind, and invents some warping, squeezing, or otherwise distorting device, into whose shaping-mold she undertakes to run all feminine humanity. As a natural result, types vanish into a more or less uniform style of display figures for the costume-maker, the dictator of manners, the prescriber of social proprieties.

And the artist? He is obliged, unless he be content to be commissioned to paint the animated lay-figures just mentioned, to search long and earnestly for his types, and to be satisfied with those odds and ends of humanity whom fashion has not found, or whom untoward fortune has made resigned to outfits in keeping with their personalities and their purses.

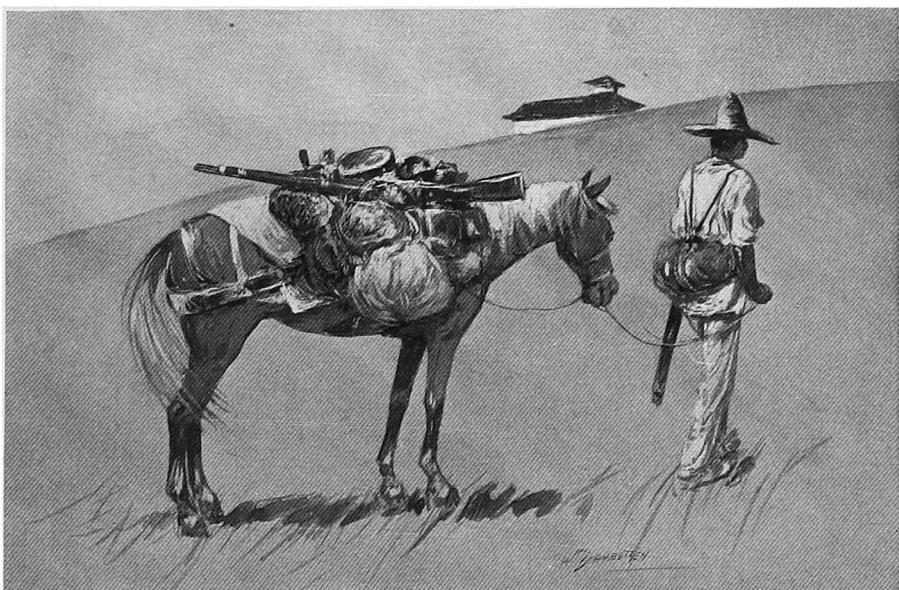
This is not meant to be jocular. It is a strict statement of fact. The artist to-day must seek his strong types among the lower, less ambitious, and less progressive classes in his own country, or go abroad, where the centuries might get mixed up by mistake, and in the absence of pointers in the way of changed manners and habiliments, one would never know the difference. In the middle and upper classes, where Dame Fashion, Mrs. Grundy, and their equally autocratic male associates hold sway, the tendency is to merge all types into one composite type, permitting only such slight variations as are necessary for the identification of names.

The art student takes a long course of instruction at some institution; perhaps he goes abroad and "studies under the best masters." He works assiduously days or months limning the divine propor-



MOOR WITH SNUFF-BOX
By William Schmedgen

tions of the Apollo Belvedere or of the Venus de Milo; he becomes so engrossed with his subjects that their graces become his dreams. He studies artistic anatomy and familiarizes himself with the mystery of expression. He conceives the idea of painting a legion, more or less, of distinct types—limbs supple, carriages free and natural, faces strong with character and marked with the impress of individuality; then he advertises or goes out on the street to look for what he has been dreaming about, and he finds a comparatively characterless multitude.



RETURNING SCOUT
By William Schmedtgen

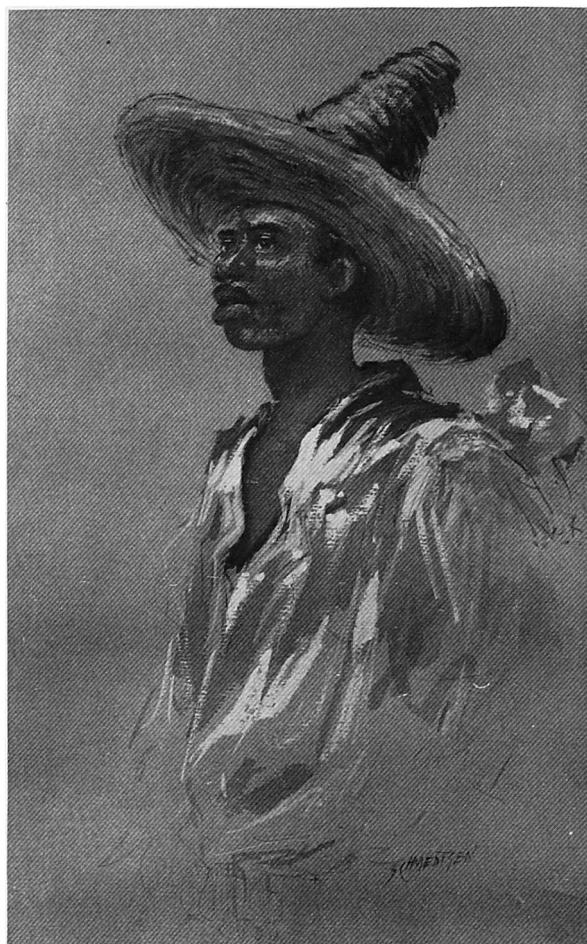
Charles Lamb divided mankind into two classes—those who borrow and those who lend. The artist, after a few weeks' search, is led to believe that Lamb wrote with a personal bias. He is inclined to make a new classification—the overwhelming majority who follow convention, and the inconspicuous minority who are so disloyal to the spirit of civilization, albeit loyal to themselves, as to snap their fingers at convention and be brave enough to own themselves simply Peters or Marys without borrowed trimmings.

It is a notable fact that a large percentage of the artists who have attained distinction as painters or sketch artists of character have gone to fields where human life is simple, or robust, or possibly degraded. Once in a while, to be sure, one will find a Charles Dana Gibson who has made a hit with society's lay-figures and given the world fashion-

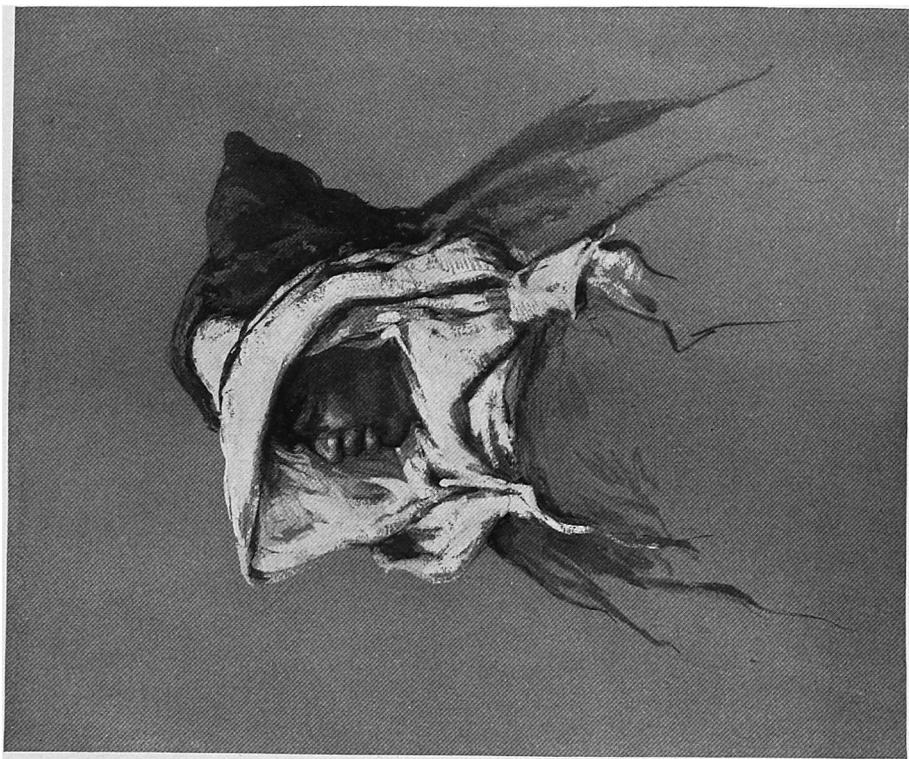
plates whose charm is a certain conventional grace and beauty. But these fashion-plates cannot by the grossest license of statement be called types. Delsarte, Worth & Company, and their predecessors in the same line of business, killed the type features in this class of people long ago. The artist to-day has to go on the byways rather than on the boulevards of life to find what he wants.

This is practically what workers in other lines have had to do. Cable found his types among the Creoles; Charles Egbert Craddock, in the Tennessee mountains; Bret Harte, among the western camps; Joel Chandler Harris, in the negro cabins; Dickens, in London's byways. There they found types of character, untouched by the refining, leveling, obliterating finger of civilization, that were acceptable to the multitude from their very novelty. Remington and some other artists have acquired a vogue by the same practice; and the more unique the types, the more they have been stamped with a strong individuality dissimilar from what one finds in reception-rooms and parquets, the more acceptable have been the pictures.

The artist who would find types in his own city had better shun the genteel emporiums, where one customer is a fairly correct trans-



TYPICAL CUBAN
By William Schmedtgen



A MOORISH CHARACTER
By William Schmedgen



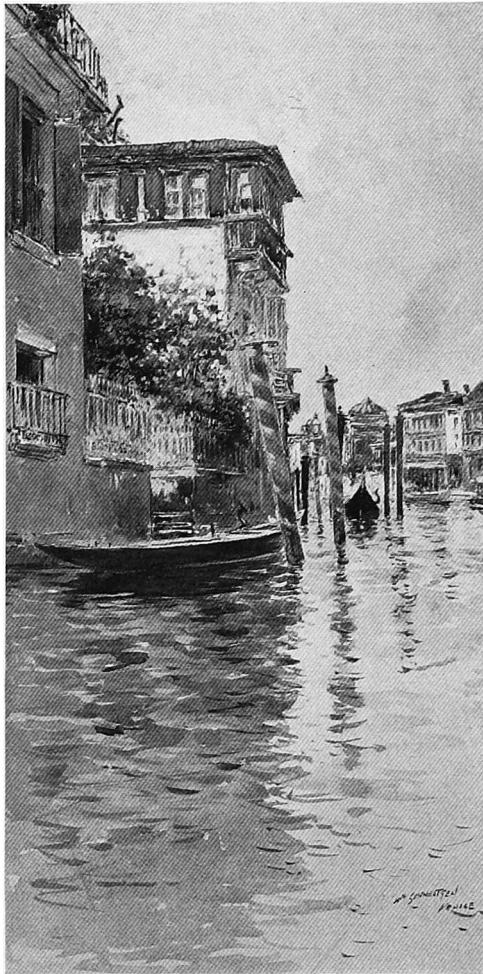
A MOORISH CHARACTER
By William Schmedgen

cript of another, and visit the bargain stores, where the pinch of circumstances has left its impress upon the patrons' faces, and one can see the value of a dollar expressed in eager glances, and chapters of past experience written in wrinkles or expressed in terms of self-aggression.

All this is preliminary, but to the point. It serves to explain why so many artists make pilgrimages to the semi-dead communities of the Old World in search of unique characters. It is the comparative dearth at home of types acceptable to the artist—and to the purchasers of the finished pictures—that led William Schmedtgen, whose studies illustrate this article, to visit Cuba, and thence cross the Atlantic to Morocco, southern Spain and Italy, to sojourn in these countries in quest of costumes and faces that have not been drawn or painted *ad nauseam*.

The essential characteristics desired were strangeness or strength of features, individuality of dress—something indicative of a life sharply removed from that of the progressive, up-to-date communities one usually finds in this country. The pictures speak for themselves. The types caught are foreign to what one meets in ordinary intercourse, and have, therefore, an unusual interest and value.

Had the Cubans portrayed been accustomed to balance dishes on their hands and look for a tip with the finger-bowl, their types would have been different. Had these rugged-looking old Moors been wont to wear Rogers, Peet & Co.'s ready-made clothes and conform to the



BIT OF COLOR IN VENICE
By William Schmedtgen

fashion of starched shirts and stand-up collars, their countenances would doubtless betray the fact.

In many of the small towns of the Old World life is stagnant. With certain limitations, the individual preferences of the rank and file take the place of fashions.

Provincial as the people are, they are ultra-metropolitan in their indifference as to their own or other people's appearance. They have their own notions, are circumscribed by their own conditions, and they dress accordingly, oblivious to the fact, or perhaps glorying in the fact, that they are different from their neighbors.

As the caravans come into the markets of Morocco, for instance, one may see an assemblage of five hundred or more Moors, and no two dressed alike. In such a gathering, there is brilliancy of coloring, life, animation—anything but the dapper sleekness or frayed gentility of dress observable where fashion rules and manufacturing enterprise makes one man the reflex of another. In the fish-markets of Italy, again, there is the same indifference to convention and the same

MOORISH MERCHANT
By William Schmedtgen

sturdy reliance on self. The people are untouched by court or court manners, and each, as regards appearance, is a law unto himself. Even the children are individual in the uniqueness and picturesqueness of their dress.

As might naturally be expected under such conditions, the artist finds a wider range of strong facial characteristics than at home. The great commoner that has done so much to soften and refine the



features in more civilized communities has there made little progress. The seaports of northern Africa and the coast towns of Italy and Spain are, therefore, in a sense, an artist's paradise as regards pictur-esque types. They have virtually remained untouched for centuries by the influences that abound in more progressive communities, and they will doubtless remain so for centuries to come. Every Moor, every Italian fisherman, every toiler of southern Spain is Peter, not Peter minus what convention has taken from him. In this country one would scarcely dare to follow the license of individual preference that is common in these Old-World communities, and hence the artist will rarely find here characters betraying in their bearing and in their every lineament such marked evidences of free, untrammeled individual life.

Strong personal traits, such as the artist prizes, be they in looks, in dress, or in customs, are fostered in communities which civilization has barely reached, or which are indifferent to progress, advancement, and general social culture. Semi-barbarous races and such out of the way nooks and corners as were visited by Mr. Schmedtgen thus offer a seductive field for research. The painter is taken away from the realm of shop-made men and modiste-made women, and is led into the land of the non-conformists. An Arab trader on the desert or a fishwife in an Italian seaport is not accustomed to conform to much of anything, and hence their value as types. It is an old maxim that, intellectually, the world's heretics are its most interest-

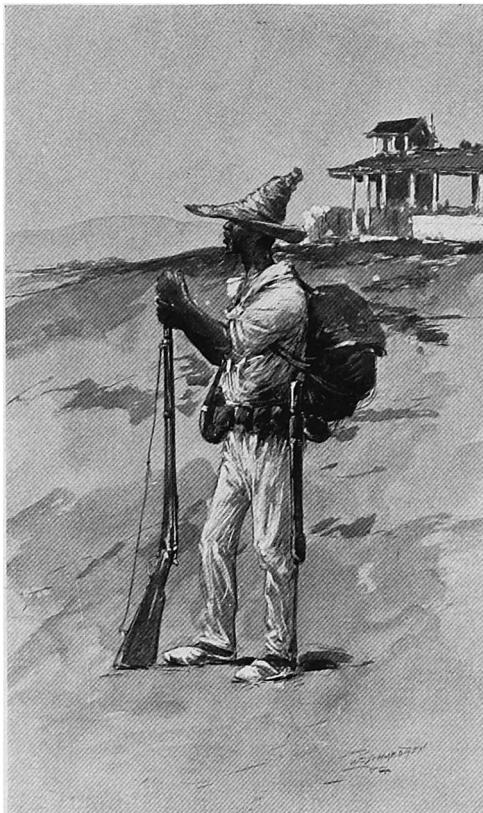


AN ARAB
By William Schmedtgen

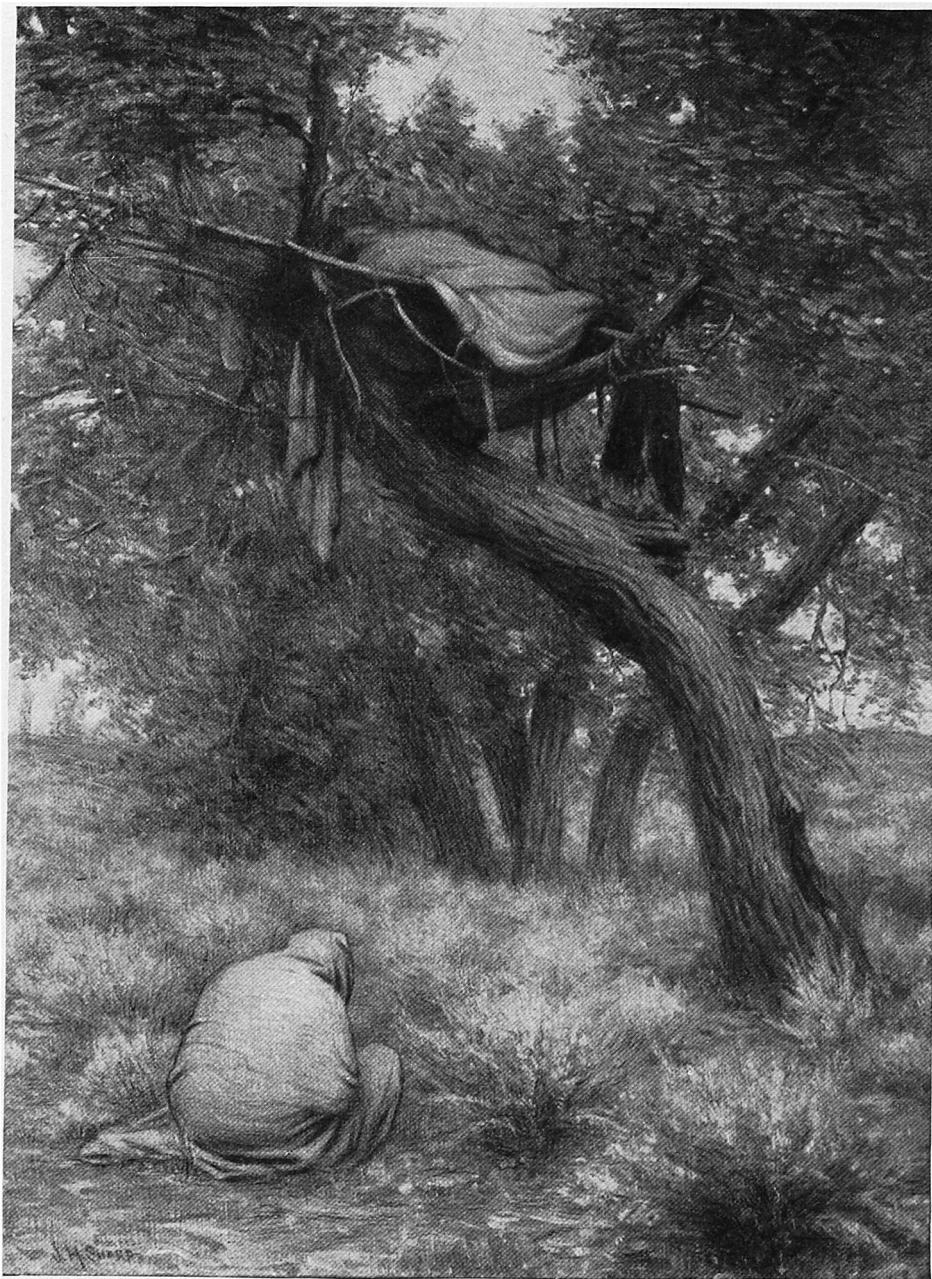
ing personages. And, in a sense, the residents of these out of the way places are the heretics of convention.

A couple of years ago colored pictures of Indians were the fad, and hundreds of thousands of them found ready sale. It was not that they were especially beautiful: they were simply types of faces and costumes that took people away from the dress-by-rule and act-by-precept walks of modern life. The Indians have had their day; the negroes, the denizens of the slums, and other such characters have been well worked. One can scarcely blame the artist for his exploring proclivities.

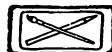
ELLIS T. CLARKE.



AT EL PASO
By William Schmedtgen



MOURNING HER BRAVE
By J. H. Sharp



AMERICAN PAINTINGS
Plate Eleven